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THE SUPERIORITY OF MORAL OVER PO-
LITICAL POWER.

BY ADIN BALLOU.

What is moral power? The power which op-
erates on the affections, passions, reason, and moral
sentiment of mankind, and thereby controls them
without physical force. It comprehends every de-
scription of influence, which, without applying or
threatening to apply physical coercion, tends to de-
termine the will, conduct and character of human
beings.

What is political power? The power of the State,
body politic, or civil government, operating under the
forms of law, and compelling or threatening to com-
pel submission to its requirements by physical force.
It comprehends every description of influence found-
ed on the authority of the State, which either applies
or threatens to apply physical coercion.

Taking these two powers, as they exist in this
country, and as they are available to philanthropists
and moral reformers, let us contrast them. We af-
firm that moral power is superior.

1. In respect to their general objects.

It is the object of moral power to regenerate pub-
lic sentiment—to superinduce a right public opinion
and will in the great mass of the people. It is the
object of political power to coerce and control by
penal laws, delinquent and refractory individuals.—
Moral power converts the majority to righteousness
in spite of ten thousand difficulties. Political power ex-
presses the new public will in the forms of law, and
by physical force, applied or threatened, overawes
the minority and coerces the unwilling few into ap-
parent submission. Moral power does ninety-nine
one hundredths of the work, and political power, in
its official robes, with a half unsheathed sword at
its side, follows after, claiming all the credit. Which
is the superior?

2. In respect to the numbers who exercise them,
moral power is superior.

Moral power is exercised by every human being,
in a greater or less degree, and is reflected from ev-
ery created thing. It is vested in the patriarch and
the new born babe; in the prince and the beggar; in
the philosopher and the idiot. It comes forth from
beast, bird, fish, insect, trees, plants, flowers, fruits,
winds, fire, floods, earth, sea and skies, with all their
infinite of startling, grand, pleasant and charming
objects. All these address themselves to the affec-
tions, passions, reason and moral sentiment of man-
kind. They all tend to determine his will, conduct
and character. Dreads, words, signs, gestures, looks,
tones, tears, sighs, animate and inanimate forms,—
yes, silence itself—more expressive sometimes than
speech,—all concur in the result. The guilty fly at
the movement of a leaf, and hear heart-searching
admonitions in the moans of the passing wind. A
falling apple suggested to great Newton the law of
universal gravitation, and revolutionized astronomical
philosophy throughout the world. Poets have gar-
nered inspiration amid the vast wonders and inimitable
beauties of nature; and God's chosen saints have been
wrapt in deeper adoration by contemplating the grand-
eur, order, and loveliness of creation. Moral power
is every where, in all things. It is exercised by, or
at least reflected from, the innumerable hosts of uni-
versal nature.

But political power is exercised by only a handful of
human beings. It is vested, nominally, in the voting
citizens, and exercised by their chosen representa-
tives in the several departments of government. And
who are voting citizens? Exclude all females, all
minors under twenty years of age, all paupers
and persons under guardianship, all slaves, all un-
naturalized foreigners, and many others for want of
the requisite property qualification. The residue
will be voting citizens, amounting to less than one
percent of the whole nation. Deduct from these the
sick, helpless, indifferent, and scrupulously con-
scientious against voting, and the average proportion of
actual voters to the mass, will be as one to six, or
more likely, as one to ten. Of these, there must be
a majority, to determine any important issue. The
party constituting the majority furnishes nearly all
the offices of government, and is itself managed in
its principal doings by a subtle few behind the cur-
tain. The whole political power in this country is
virtually in the hands of less than one fiftieth part
of the people. A bushel of wheat in a mountain of
straw and chaff.

3. In respect to the prominent details of their op-
eration, moral power is superior.

Moral power unites male and female in marriage,
multiplies human beings, subdues the earth, increases
wealth, forms neighborhoods, and builds cities. Pol-
itical power takes the census, levies taxes, trains
soldiers to do its fighting, and assumes the office of
protecting the people. Moral power educates the
people, intellectually, religiously, morally, socially
and industrially. Political power tickles their ambi-
tion, uses up their faculties, consumes their substance,
and punishes a few of their grosser crimes. Moral
power is busy in the nursery, in the old school house,
academy and college, in the laboratory, the library,
the study, the hall of science, the meeting house, the
conference room, and the sick chamber. Political
power is busy managing causes, regulating town
meetings, attending the legislature, holding courts,
guarding prisoners, hanging murderers, cropping and
branding counterfeiters, whipping thieves, setting

knives in the pillory, and executing all manner of legal
processes. Moral power is instant in season and
out of season, endeavoring to reform and bless soci-
ety. Political power is watching jealously every
movement among the people that threatens to lessen
its consequences, reform its abuses, or cut off its rav-
ens. It clings with a death grasp to all its prerog-
atives, immunities, formalities, honors, and emolu-
ments. Moral power traverses the highways and by-
ways in search of the fallen and lost to restore them.
Political power cares for none of these things. It
knows how to punish, but not how to restore. Moral
power reforms thousands of drunkards, and thereby
prevents ten thousand crimes. Political power hon-
ors respectable drunkards, and protects the manufac-
ture and sale of drunkard's ruin. Yet if one of
them, in his madness, slays a man, or burns a house,
it ostentatiously arrests, tries and hangs him. Moral
power is putting forth mighty energies to abolish
slavery, and elevate three millions of degraded bo-
dies to the rank of manhood. It is exerting its multi-
form influence to regenerate a corrupt public senti-
ment, and to superinduce a will in the people of the
United States to let the oppressed go free. Political
power hinders and obstructs the progress of this re-
form by every possible means. It is wedded to slav-
ery, and will uphold it till a new public opinion com-
pels it to stand off. Moral power is earnestly en-
gaged in abolishing the horrid custom of war. Political
power is doing all it can, by precept and practice, to
preserve this custom. Moral power is trying to
bring about universal reformation, holiness and hap-
piness on earth. Political power is chiefly concerned
to keep things as they are, whether right or wrong.

4. In respect to their instrumentalities, moral
power is superior.

Look at the number and efficiency of those in-
fluences which moral power is every where employ-
ing to enlighten and improve mankind. Though
many of them are sadly perverted, and need to be
rightly directed, yet from their peculiar nature, end-
less variety, and universal activity, they are capable
of producing stupendous results. There is Religion
acting directly on the noblest, and, for good or evil,
the mightiest faculty of human nature, with all its
elevating hopes and awful fears, with its thrice ten
thousand ministers, alters, congregations and Sunday
schools; its prayers, sermons, magazines, news-
papers and tracts innumerable; its Bibles, commentaries,
hymn books and liturgies; its Bible Societies,
Missionary Societies, Tract Societies, Education So-
cieties and Theological Seminaries; its sanctity, piety,
learning and devotion. Is it not alone an
overmatch for all the forces of political power. Pol-
itical power could not stand a month against the un-
divided influence of Religion. If the Religion of this
land could be perfectly Christianized in its doctrines
and duties, every evil now connected with political
power would presently vanish away before it. Next
comes education; in the nursery, the infant school,
the common school, the high school, the academy,
the lyceum, the lecture room, the college, the univer-
sity. Count up all these, with their school books,
manuals, apparatus and libraries, their teachers, pro-
fessors, tutors and eminent professors. What have
we in the province of political power corresponding
to all this? Literature follows and perfects educa-
tion. Think of the authors, editors and publish-
ers: of their works, from the alphabetical primer to
the huge folio; text books, histories, biographies,
scientific repositories, encyclopedias, fiction, ro-
mance and sentiment in every variety of prose and
verse: all that man knows, thinks, imagines or sus-
pects, written and printed in countless volumes, annu-
als, quarterlies, monthlies, weeklies and dailies! If
one of former times could say with truth, "Let
me write the ballads of the nation, and I care not
who writes its laws," what shall we think of the
concurrent influence of education and literature, ac-
ting upon the public of this country through all these
appliances? What has political power to compare
with it? The higher arts and sciences are not to be
forgotten. The painter and sculptor are mocking
nature on canvass and in marble. All this is awful,
sublime, sacred, pure, touching, exquisite, strange,
facets, laughable, fascinating—all that can move
the soul, or ravish the imagination, is found among
the productions of genius. The engraver follows
after, and enables the press to scatter broad cast an
endless variety of pictorial representations. And, as
if all this were not enough, the Daguerreotype com-
pletes the work. Music, with magic powers and re-
sistless charms, as she chants the sweetest strains
of the poet, asserts her importance among the instru-
mentalities of moral power. The miracles of Or-
pheus are almost equalled by modern masters. Who
has ever listened to the simple, pathetic, soul-sub-
duing, heart-purifying strains of our Anti-Slavery
Hutchinsons without confessing the majesty of music
—the potency of its sway over all the feelings of our
nature? Could we bring every band, every choir,
all the masters of this captivating art into the service
of Temperance, Freedom and Peace, what would
they not accomplish for our world? Still more im-
portant, moral power claims as peculiarly its own, po-
litical power disdains, the influence of woman. And
who can estimate this influence? It is one that com-
mences mysteriously with the first pulsations of life,
and constantly operates till the unconsciousness of
death. What does not the mother, sister, lover, wife
and friend do for man? Alas, that the influence
should ever be abused as it sometimes is! But it
need not be abused. It may all be consecrated to the
redemption and perfection of the race. Much, very
much of it is also consecrated to that end. Where is
the great or good man, of ancient, or modern times;
or where is the great or noble enterprise, that ever

wrought out blessings for humanity, unaided and
unaided by woman? While heroes are riding their
war horses victoriously over the slain, or swimming
in blood to a throne, the good mother is nursing and
educating, in obscurity, benefactors for a degra-
ded and suffering world. Unnoticed, unknown, un-
asked, and unthanked woman nourishes, refreshes,
cheers, consoles, elevates and sustains human society. All
that promises to reform and restore, poor fallen hu-
manity, true-hearted woman is among the first to
faith, hope, charity and good works to promote. Har-
dly ever gentleness, loveliness, taste, sympathy, deli-
cate intellect, zeal, patience, devotion, perseverance
and self-denial, prayers, tears, smiles, alto-
gether exert an influence over mankind, to which po-
litical power with its mighty armies and armies must
ever succumb. When woman are what they ought
to be, and do what they may do, Intemperance, War,
vice, crime, punishment, covetousness, cruelty and
crime will pass away forever. Then will the king-
doms of this world, become the kingdoms of our Lord
Jesus Christ. Last, we bring into this category the
numerous family of voluntary Associations; charita-
ble, humane, philanthropic and moral reform soci-
eties of every description. All these are instrumen-
talities developed and employed by moral power.—
And who can estimate the good they have done, or
the evil they have prevented? Witness their benevo-
lence, self-sacrifice, truthfulness and zeal. See my-
riads of wretched drunkards lifted from the gutter to
sobriety, respectability and comfort. See millions of
men and women prevented from becoming the victims
of intemperance. Hear with what faithfulness and
more courage the poor imbruted, helpless slaves are
pleaded for by devoted men and women, in the
presence of frowning political power, wealth and false
religion. Voices are every where crying in the wil-
derness, and in the city, against the wickedness of the
oppressor, and the heartlessness of the people. Every
corner of the land is searched as with candles, and
the nation is beginning to ferment from centre to cir-
cumference as with leaven. The foolishness of
preaching and publishing the truth is gradually work-
ing the overthrow of tyranny and cruelty. Mean-
time, War, with its gory machinery is manfully as-
sailed, and exposed in all its hatefulness, by the sons
and daughters of Peace. Their weapons are not
carnal, but yet mighty in this holy conflict. Degr-
aded and forsaken females are sought after, and taken
by the hand, with tears of ecstasy by the Sisters of
Moral Reform, and ever with them, nearly dead are
brought to life.

The guilty and endangered criminal,
once considered unfit for sympathy or compas-
sion, feels the blessings of Prisoner's Friend Soci-
eties; is visited in his dreary cell by brothers and sis-
ters of charity, who dare tell him he has a Father
in heaven, an interceding Redeemer, and angels of
mercy that seek his salvation. And when political
power has done with him, if he escapes with his life,
these brothers and sisters take him by the hand, find a
home for him, and do all they can to restore him to so-
ciety as a good and useful member. Others again
are busy in improving the condition of seamen, so
long neglected in rescuing the drowning, relieving
penitents sick, affording refuge to the abandoned, an
asylum to the orphan, and to the unfortunate insane;
befriending the destitute, feeding the hungry, clothing
the naked, giving eyes to the blind and soundness to
the lame; enlightening the ignorant, reforming the
vicious, preventing pauperism and crime, in fine,
blessing the bodies and souls of mankind. Such are
the instrumentalities of moral power. Such are its
unostentatious but mighty and manifold works. In
the face of all this, let political power look up and
present its vaunted resources. Oh! its swords, its
muskets, its cannon, its powder and ball, its forts, ar-
senals, dock yards and ships of war: its regulars, its
militia, its banners, caps, feathers, tinseled epaulettes,
particolored uniforms; its jail, prisons, gibbets, pillor-
ies, whipping posts and stocks; its courts, processes
and technicalities: its congresses, general assemblies,
town meetings, caucuses and vigilance committees;
its wire pullers, pipe layers, shameless newspapers,
and brazen faced demagogues! all crying like the
daughters of the horse leech, "Give! give!" office and
salary! Mighty as political power is, in physical
force and money; terrible as it sometimes is in ven-
geance, what is it compared with moral power? And
what is all the good it does compared with the good
done by moral power? Why then is it so dreaded,
courted, lauded, and sought after, even by professed
philanthropists and moral reformers?

But we have not done with the contrast.

5. In respect to priority and independence of ac-
tion, moral power is superior.

Moral power is natural, spontaneous and indepen-
dent in its action. It originates ideas, feelings, senti-
ments and changes of human conduct. It operates
not only without but against political power; and
obliges political power to conform to its dictates. As
an illustration, look at the rise and triumph of the
Christian religion. It had no political power. It was
a babe in a manger. Political power slew fourteen
thousand innocents to make sure of its destruction.
But it survived and grew up to maturity. Herod and
Pilate, Jewish power and Roman power crucified,
slew, burnt, tortured and persecuted. Yet it prevail-
ed in spite of the whole. It was never mightier;
never more rapid in its progress. So it has been on
a small scale with the Temperance Reform. It com-
menced in the face of all the untoward laws of po-
litical power, as well as of all the habits, popular cus-
toms and prejudices of the age. Yet it grew in
strength and numbers to the astonishment of the
world. It never advanced more rapidly and trium-
phantly than when it relied wholly on the resources of
moral power. What important change was ever

brought about for the public good by political power
alone? It originates no such changes. It never
thinks of making any such changes, till moral power
has suggested them, and prepared the public mind to
acquiesce in them! Political power is artificial, me-
chanical, and incapable of doing anything good,
without the crutch, preparative and sustaining in-
fluence of moral power.

6. In respect to their freedom and elasticity, moral
power is superior.

Moral power is not restricted to times, places and
set forms. It is not confined to certain classes of
persons, within certain lines of latitude and longitude,
nor to particular cases of conduct and character. It
is chained to no arbitrary processes. It is free and
elastic as the mountain air. It is at home every
where, among all human beings, at all times and
places. Not so with political power. It is restricted
on every side by Constitutions, laws, regulations,
precedents, formalities and usages. It must not med-
dle with persons or property, excepting at a particular
time, within particular geographical limits, with cer-
tain preliminaries, and according to certain technical
forms of proceeding. Its every process, this side of
war, is liable to be hindered and quashed, by reason
of some constitutional, legal or technical defect. A
Governor is elected by a single vote, or loses his elec-
tion by the accidental omission of a letter in his
name on half a dozen ballots. A whole estate is
lost or gained by the inadvertent omission, or inser-
tion of a word in some document or record. Political
power operates through a complex and cumbrous ma-
chine, with immense internal friction, and very awk-
wardly accomplishes a small amount of good at an
enormous expense.

7. In various other respects moral power is su-
perior.

Moral power operates through all its multifor-
m processes, and accomplishes its magnificent results
with little show, and at its own expense. Political
power puts on its robes, sounds a trumpet, and pa-
rades its machinery before the public eye, at the ex-
pense of the public. It taxes them as heavily as
they will bear, compels them to pay the assessment,
and takes care to secure to itself an ample remun-
eration. Many persons continually magnify the ben-
efits conferred on the people by governments, and the
execution of the laws. But whatever government may
do for the governed in any way, it always takes care
to see itself and its principal functionaries well paid.
The fable of Justice Monkey eating up the cheese
for two litigant cats, is not a metaphor. They who
are fortunate enough to keep clear of political power
are fortunate indeed.

Again, Moral power, being unostentatious and
disinterested, exerts a purifying and ennobling in-
fluence on the character of its votaries. We are all
made wiser and better by humble and unselfish ef-
forts to render others so. And every moral philan-
thropist feels that his own soul has grown in grace
just in proportion to the fidelity and self sacrifice with
which he has labored to promote any great and good
cause. This is not the least important part of his
reward. But political power has the contrary tenden-
cy. It generally renders its devotees more selfish,
corrupt, hollow-hearted and tyrannical. Many a
decently good man has gone into the labyrinth of
politics, and held office to his own moral ruin. And
where is there one that ever came out more fit for the
kingdom of heaven; unless driven by disgust from
its sorceries? It requires no ordinary virtue to main-
tain one's moral integrity against the seductions of
political power.

Finally, Moral power has devised and accom-
plished nearly all the good that has been done among
mankind since the foundation of the world. It has
discovered, invented, and perfected, all manner of im-
provements—mechanical, chemical, intellectual, so-
cial, moral and religious, which distinguish and
adorn the most civilized, enlightened, and christian
portions of mankind. It has done most of these
mighty works in poverty and solitude, with little or
no countenance from political power or its worship-
pers, and not unfrequently in spite of their most
deadly opposition. On the other hand, political pow-
er seldom patronizes the benefactors of their race till
they are quite able to take care of themselves. It
generally starves, crucifies, or stones them; and af-
terwards erects monuments to their memories; or gar-
nishes their sepulchres. It is busy with its own lusts,
injuries, pleasures, and self-preservation. It has de-
luded the earth with blood, and persecuted many of
the most righteous causes that were ever proposed to
the consideration of man. Moral power has always
been struggling to reform political power, and has
with great difficulty succeeded in clothing it with its
present respectability. All the good there is in it or
about it has been wrought out with toil, tears and suf-
ferings by moral power. And it never will become
what it ought to be, till moral power shall have com-
pletely saturated it with Christian principles. Then
will it cease from all craft, fraud, intrigue, and vio-
lence, and wisely coerce the few that may need co-
ercion at all, only by an injudicious, beneficent phys-
ical force, which shall equally secure the individual
and public welfare.

Moral power is therefore incomparably superior to
political power; in respect to their objects; to the
numbers that exercise them; to the prominent details
of their operation; to their instrumentalities; to pri-
ority and independence of action; to their freedom
and elasticity; to their disinterestedness, their expense,
their influence on their devotees, the service they have
rendered mankind, and their very nature and tenden-
cy throughout. Has not this superiority been suf-
ficiently demonstrated? If, not, let the panegyrist
and dependents of political power show the contrary.